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STATISTICS OF THE COLORED RACE IN THE UNITED STATES.

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It is to the now defunct institution of chattel slavery that we owe the existence of one of the most important elements of our population,— the colored race.

The past history of this race within the United States is of deep, though painful, interest; while its future forms a subject of puzzling speculation, inasmuch as the question presents itself with much force, whether an element brought hither, in the first instance, compulsion, without any deference to, or consideration of, the motives which urged hither the original white settlers of this coast, or any subsequent body of colonists, can be maintained in its entirety and kept up to its relative importance, against the social and economic competition of the other elements of the population, now that the institution of chattel slavery has been violently broken down and the blacks have been, almost by act of war, placed in a state of legal equality.

I have said that it is to slavery we owe the presence of the African, in any considerable numbers, upon our shores. It is estimated that the Slave Trade has, first and last, taken from

Africa 40,000,000 of her people. How many of these contributed to the present negro population of the United States? The usual estimates of the importation of black slaves into the British Colonies prior to 1776 make the total number 200,000. The survivors and the descendants of these were computed to amount, at that date, to about 550,000. These estimates are, however, very rudely made. Even after the establishment of the present form of government and the inauguration of the series of national censuses we find Dr. Seybert lamenting that so little attention was paid to the blacks in the enumeration, on account of their being regarded solely as a species of property, without any consideration of the various sociological interests concerned with the facts of their numbers or their condition.

The occurrence of the Revolutionary war caused great disturbances among the colored people of the insurrectionary states, especially at the South. As the contending armies dragged their trains and camps alternately over the face of Virginia, the Carolinas, and Georgia, great numbers of slaves accompanied Tory masters, as these became refugees; great numbers deserted patriot masters for the more luxurious service of British officers, or to become camp followers, of the redcoats. So much is known. It is also to be conjectured, almost with certainty, that the rate of mortality among this portion of the population was considerably increased through the hardships of the protracted war, and that the importation of slaves was somewhat checked by the condition of things existing between 1775 and 1783.

It was this depletion of the normal supply of slave labor through the effects of war which gave weight to the demands of the representatives of the planting states, in the Constitutional Convention of 1787, that their communities should be allowed a moderate period in which to replenish the slave markets before all further importations should be cut off by Constitutional inhibition. They argued that their labor system had been inherited by them; that, it being what it

was, their constituents were suffering from losses (of this species of property) which had been brought upon them by their devotion to the common cause of all the states — independence of Great Britain — and that they should not be punished for their patriotic endeavors.

It was in consequence of representations like these that the Constitution of 1787 was made to contain a provision that the power of Congress over commerce with foreign nations should not be exercised to prohibit the importation of slaves prior to 1808, twenty years, that is, from the year in which it was anticipated the Constitution would be ratified.

The first census, 1790, discovered the number of colored persons in the United States to be 757,208, of whom 59,527 were free, the latter number being about equally divided between the free states and the slave states, the free blacks of North Carolina being 4975; of Virginia, 12,866; of Maryland, 8043; of Delaware, 3899.

The colored element at this census constituted a larger proportion of the population than ever after, viz., 19.3 per cent.

By 1800 the colored element had increased absolutely to 1,002,037, being a gain of 32.33 per cent; but had declined relatively to 18.9 per cent of the entire population. The free colored had risen to 108,435.

By 1810 the colored element had reached 1,377,808, a gain of 37.5 per cent upon its own numbers in 1800, and of 81.96 per cent upon its own numbers in 1790. It had, also, advanced slightly towards its former share of the total population of the country, being now 19 per cent of the whole. The free colored had risen to 186,446. The admission of Louisiana brought in nearly 50,000 colored persons, of whom six-sevenths were slaves.

One cause of the increase in the colored population of 1810 over 1800 had been the stimulation of the slave trade, due to the near approach of that date on which, to the honor of the American name, it became a thing forever after prohibited, — a felony, and, by statutory definition, piracy.

I have tried in vain to secure reliable information regarding the importation of slaves, under the permission of the Constitution, between 1790 and 1808. Mr. H. C. Carey, in his work "A History of the Slave Trade," puts the number at 90,000; but I have been unable to ascertain that Mr. Carey had sufficient data for the construction of more than a highly conjectural estimate. The only positive source of knowledge appears to be the customs records of the port of Charleston, S. C.

By 1820 the number of the colored had risen to 1,771,656, a gain of 28.59 per cent in ten years, of 76.8 per cent in 20 years, and of 133.97 per cent in 30 years. Its share in the total population of the country had sunk to 18.4.

By 1830 the number of the colored had increased to 2,328,642, a gain of 31.44 per cent in 10 years; of 69.01 in 20 years; and of 132.39 in 30 years. Its share in the total population had still further sunk to 18.1. The acquisition of Florida had added 16,345 colored, against 18,385 whites.

By 1840 the numbers of this race had risen to 2,873,648, a gain of 23.4 per cent in 10 years; of 62.2 per cent in 20 years; and of 108.57 per cent in 30 years. The number of free colored was then 386,293, being 13 per cent of the total colored. The share of the colored element in the total population of the country had fallen to 16.8.

By 1850 the number of the colored had risen to 3,638,808, a gain of 26.63 per cent in 10 years; of 56.26 per cent in 20, and of 105.39 per cent in 30 years. This element then contributed 15.7 per cent to the population of the country.

The acquisition of California, Texas, New Mexico, and Utah during the above period had added 331,611 whites and 59,799 colored to our population, the two elements in the new territory having about the same numerical relation as throughout the United States at large.

The next step brings us to the threshold of the war which wrought such tremendous changes in the condition and prospects of the colored race in the United States, and which at

a blow destroyed that relation which alone could have induced the presence of any considerable body of Africans upon our soil.

In 1860 the number of the colored had risen to 4,441,830, being a gain of 22.07 per cent in 10 years, of 54.57 per cent in 20 years; and of 90.74 per cent in 30 years. The proportion of this element to the total population was 14.1 per cent; that is, one-seventh of the inhabitants of the United States were then colored. The free colored were 488,070.

Four years of war ensued. Had Congress, in an enlightened view of the immense importance of ascertaining precisely where that great struggle left us, provided for the taking of a census, in 1865, with improved modern machinery of enumeration, we should have obtained results of almost priceless value. Unfortunately, however, the attention of our politicians was fixed on matters of very much less consequence. Not only was no special enumeration resorted to in 1865, but when the time approached for taking the ninth census, in 1870, the Senate rejected a bill, prepared chiefly by the labors and services of Gen. Garfield, which had passed the House of Representatives by an immense majority.

The country was thus thrown back upon the existing law regulating the enumeration, a law which had always been defective in its provisions, but which had become as inadequate to the work requiring to be done in 1870 as the old smooth-bore, muzzle-loading Queen's arm of the Revolution would be to meet the demands of modern warfare. Bad, however, as was the law, the political situation greatly aggravated its defects. The South was then in a state of intense agitation; portions of it almost in a race-war; the Kuklux outrages were at their height on the one side, while the carpet-bag governments, sustained by federal force, were doing their worst to alienate all friends of law and order, of public decency and public honesty.

It was in such a situation that the Census of 1870 was to

be taken; and, instead of entrusting the local supervision of this important work—a work requiring in an eminent degree the confidence and the cheerful co-operation of all classes and all parties—to persons specially appointed for the purpose, chosen for their supposed fitness for the task, and so chosen as to win popular support to the enumeration, instead of this the local supervision of the census in the Southern states was, by the defeat of Gen. Garfield's bill, thrown back into the hands of the Marshals of the United States Courts: officers thoroughly identified, at every point, with the party and race struggles that had convulsed society from 1865 to 1870; officers necessarily unpopular in an intense degree, even if through no fault of their own, among the most enlightened and normally influential portions of their several communities; officers appointed for another purpose, and amenable to a different department from that to which the census is assigned; officers chosen without the slightest reference to their capability for, or their interest in, statistical work; officers, some of whom were intelligent, honest, and patriotic, some of whom, like too many federal officials at the South during the period in question, lacked one or more of these qualifications; officers, every one of whom, if he had possessed otherwise all the qualifications that could be desired for such a service, had enough, and more than enough, in the way of his regular duties, in the enforcement of the revenue and other laws of the United States, in those troubled districts, in those troublous days, to occupy every moment of his time from January to December. And, as the Census Office had no part in the selection of these prime agents, so it had no part in the selection of their subordinate agents, the so-called Assistant Marshals, the actual enumerators of the population. Not even a veto could be exercised at Washington.

Good, actually good, appointments were not even to be expected as a general thing. The whole battle against the Garfield bill had been fought on the question of patronage.

It was for the avowed purpose of retaining this large body of more or less lucrative appointments in the hands of the dominant party that the United States Marshals rallied in Washington, during the winter of 1869-70, to defeat the House measure. They wanted to use these thousands of offices as a means of strengthening their hands in their respective districts, to fight the Kuklux and the illicit distillers; to build up the republican party and consolidate the negro vote. And, in general, this was precisely the use to which those offices were put. Some Marshals, especially in states which had a large and respectable white republican vote, as in Virginia, West Virginia, Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, and Missouri, found it compatible with party interests to appoint intelligent enumerators; and in some districts the work was as well done as in any at the North or West. In other districts, where the newly enfranchised negroes constituted 40, 50, 60, 70, or even 80 per cent of the population, and where the whites, with a few insignificant and often disreputable exceptions, were banded together within the democratic party, the power of appointment was exercised to the inexpressible injury of the census service. Negroes who could not write or read were selected for this difficult, delicate, and responsible duty. Accompanied, perhaps, by some poor white man, with such clerical accomplishments as might be expected, these officers of the law pushed their way into mansions where their intrusion was resented as an insult, or sought to traverse the bridle-paths of extensive districts—districts three or four or five times as large as could properly be assigned to single officers—to find the hundreds and thousands of log-houses in which the poorer part of the population, white or black, found shelter.

No one who is familiar with the conditions of life at the South will hesitate to admit that it would be a work of the greatest difficulty for a man of more than average intelligence, with an instinct for topography and a fair knowledge of woodcraft and accustomed to the saddle, to traverse a dis-

trict containing 400 square miles, in a broken and wooded country, and not, in spite of the utmost diligence and fidelity, fail to come upon scores of cabins, hidden away in ravines, or in the depths of forests, often without so much as a bridle-path leading up to the door. It would often be no small task to find such a cabin, even if you knew it was somewhere in the neighborhood, and were specially looking for it and for it alone. The chance of missing it, when you had no information of its existence, and were only looking around for human abodes in general, would be very great indeed.

But why protract the miserable story of a most difficult, delicate, and important work sacrificed to the maintenance of carpet-bag governments, or to the exigencies of the judicial department in its contest with the Kuklux and the illicit distillers, or to even less creditable purposes of party managers. The result was an enumeration which we now know from indisputable evidence to have been in many parts of several Southern states inadequate, partial, and inaccurate, often in a shameful degree.

The number of colored persons returned in the Census of 1870 was but 4,880,009, a gain of only 9.86 per cent in 10 years; 34.11 per cent in 20 years, and 69.82 per cent in 30 years, leaving this element but 12.7 per cent of the total population.

The reason why so great a reported falling off, not in the colored population absolutely, but in their previously sustained ratio of increase, did not excite incredulity, did not arouse challenge, was the intervention of the war since the Census of 1860, a cause that seemed potent enough to account for almost any effect. This country had had no previous experience of a long desolating war within its borders to furnish any measure of the possible influence of such a force. It was not in the nature of the case unreasonable that the ratio of increase in this element of the population should have fallen off from 22.07 per cent between 1850 and 1860 to 9.86 per cent between 1860 and 1870. The slaves

had first been declared property contraband of war; and unknown numbers of them had escaped through the Confederate lines, or had followed the march of our armies, to become camp followers, or to herd miserably in cities and contraband camps, where the rate of mortality was known to be fearfully high, as anyone can see for himself by looking at the cemetery at Arlington, near Washington. Then the slaves had been declared free; and it was not irrationally argued that, wholly unaccustomed to care for their own wants, or to direct their own movements, the negroes had, when once the control of their masters was withdrawn, pursued courses and suffered hardships which had not, indeed, actually reduced the numbers of this people, but had sharply checked their rate of increase. Still again, it was credibly asserted that child-bearing had been associated in the minds of the negroes with slavery; and that, freed from the dictation of their former masters, and revelling in an unaccustomed freedom of movement and of indulgence in social and convivial life, the women of this race had diminished the birth rate purposely.

All these considerations are so perfectly rational in themselves, and coincided so well with the reports from the few Southern cities in which the registration of births, marriages, and deaths was maintained (the number of deaths among the colored population being reported often as high as 40 or 50 in 1000) that the figures for the colored population which were put forth in 1870 met with little or no serious challenge, but were generally accepted as representing, at least approximately, the facts of that year.

The Census of 1880, however, revealed unmistakably that the count of the colored population, in 1870, had been defective in several states, especially those which, like South Carolina and Mississippi, contained a very large excess of the colored element. This became evident from the first collocation of the figures of the Tenth Census; and local examinations, at the points where the greatest discrepancies

existed, proved conclusively that the Assistant Marshals of those districts, at the Ninth Census, had shamefully slurred over their work.

The count of 1880 showed 6,580,793 colored, an apparent gain over 1870 of 34.85 per cent; a gain—undoubted—of 48.15 per cent in 20 years, and of 80.85 per cent in 30 years.

For a time the spirit of party led some to contest the count of 1880; but the further investigation was carried, the more manifest it became that this count was essentially correct, and that the fault lay with the Census of 1870.

The reason for better work at the later date was found not merely in the restoration of peace, order, and comparative harmony throughout the lately disturbed section, together with the awakened interest of all classes of people in whatever might concern their social and industrial progress. That reason was found in a much higher degree in what might have been had just as well as not in 1870, viz., in sound provisions of law for the conduct of the enumeration.

By the Act of 1879, which was mainly based upon the Garfield bill of 1869–70, the supervision of the census was taken away from the Marshals of the United States courts and vested in Supervisors, appointed simply with reference to this service, and selected on account of their presumed qualifications therefor. These Supervisors gave, as a rule, their entire time for from five to eight months to the organization and conduct of this work. The Supervisors of 1880 were two and one-half times in number the Marshals of 1870, so that, with far more time at his command, each Supervisor was called to overlook a much smaller field. Supervisors were appointed from either political party, with the utmost impartiality. And, as they were themselves selected without regard to partisan services, they were officially instructed that it would be considered an offense and an abuse of trust if in their own appointment of enumerators they allowed partisan motives to appear. The enumerators of 1880, who succeeded to the work of the Assistant Marshals

of 1870, thus freed from supposed obligations to render party services, were largely taken from among school-teachers, county or town clerks, assessors, or other persons having familiarity with figures and facility in writing. All these appointments were subject to the negative of the Census Office, which fact alone was sufficient to prevent any considerable proportion of bad selections, inasmuch as the disappointed could at once enter protest at Washington; while, from the moment each enumerator began his work until the evening he closed it, he was bound to render a daily report to the Census Office on postal cards specially prepared for the purpose.

Most important of all, however, was the better supervision of the smaller enumeration districts of 1880. By the former law, districts might embrace as many as 20,000 inhabitants, not only causing the enumeration to be protracted over a long time, but requiring the enumerator to canvass an extensive district, and, by consequence, to work much of his term in country with which he was acquainted only in a very general way, or, more probably, not at all.

By the Act of 1879 districts were not to exceed 4000 inhabitants, and the Census Office was entrusted with the control of the formation of districts equally with the appointment of enumerators. As against the 6400 Assistant Marshals of 1870, 31,500 enumerators, each within a clearly defined district, were set to work on the 1st of June, 1880. In other words, after allowing for the extension of the settled area during the preceding decade, the average size of an enumeration district in 1880 was only about one-fourth that of an enumeration district of 1870; so that the agent of the government was kept at work always much nearer his home, upon ground he was familiar with, and among people many of whom he personally knew.

A score of minor points might be made in this comparison of the Act of 1879 with that of 1850, as establishing the agencies for the enumeration of the population, but the foregoing will suffice to show how it came about that, with a

better state of public feeling at the South, with an increased interest in the results of the census, and with improved machinery of enumeration, from the central office out to the remotest district of the land, the count of 1880 was at once so much more sweeping and so much more searching than that of 1870.

That the white population shared in some degree in the omissions resulting from the defective methods and negligent service of 1870 is beyond question: but it is only the probable loss among the colored which I shall consider in the remainder of this paper.

For the purposes of this inquiry let us bring together into one table the figures which we have given in connection with successive censuses. The table will then be constructed as follows:—

	Colored Population.	Per Cent of Total Population.	Increase, Per Cent.		
			10 Years.	20 Years.	30 Years.
1790	757,208	19.3
1800	1,002,037	18.9	32.33
1810	1,377,808	19.0	37.50	81.96
1820	1,771,656	18.4	28.59	76.80	133.97
1830	2,328,642	18.1	31.44	69.01	132.39
1840	2,873,648	16.8	23.40	62.20	108.57
1850	3,638,808	15.7	26.63	56.26	105.39
1860	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870	4,880,009	12.7	9.86	34.11	69.82
1880	6,580,793	13.1	34.85	48.15	80.85

It is by reference to the columns which present the increase, per cent, in the colored population by 20 years' and by 30 years' periods, that we find the clearest indication regarding the probable numbers of this element of the population in 1870.

It will be noted that there had been a continuous decline, though not at a uniform rate, in the per cent of increase by 20 and by 30 years' periods from the beginning. This movement was apparently still in progress when the war occurred

in 1861. Nothing is known to have occurred between 1860 and 1870 which was of a nature to reverse the previous course of decline in this element. On the contrary, while the public mind, in anticipation of the Census of 1870, exaggerated the exceptional losses of the decade among the colored population, those losses must have been severe and extensive. Although on the old plantations something like the habitual rate of increase may have been maintained, there is an overwhelming concurrence of testimony that in camps and cities the mortality of the colored people had been excessive. We conclude, therefore, that it would be in the highest degree irrational to assume that the rate of increase among the colored population during the 20 years' period was greater than during the corresponding period ending in 1860.

1. Let us see what would have been their actual numbers in 1870, provided the rate of increase in the 20 years' period ending in 1870 had been found to be precisely the same as in the corresponding period ending in 1860, viz., 54.57 per cent. In this case we should have a colored population of 5,624,505; and our table for the later decades would have to be reconstructed as follows:—

	Colored Population.	Per Cent of Total Population.*	Increase, Per Cent.		
			10 Years.	20 Years.	30 Years.
1860	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870	5,624,505	14.3	26.63	54.57	95.72
1880	6,580,793	13.1	17.00	48.15	80.85

*In constructing this and the following tables, the total population for 1870 has, of course, been increased by the same amount as the colored population.

Here we see that, on such an assumption, the colored in 1870 contributed a larger proportion of the population than in 1860. Again, this would make the rate of increase for those ten years 26.63 per cent, although it had been only 22.07 per cent during the ten years preceding, and sank to

17 per cent in the ten years following. Again, this would make the rate of increase in thirty years 95.72 per cent, although it had only been 90.74 per cent in the 30 years ending 1860; and was found to be only 80.85 per cent for the 30 years' period, 1850-80. Do we need to accumulate more improbabilities as against this assumed ratio?

2. Let us inquire what would have been the actual number of the colored in 1870, provided the rate of increase had been the same for the 30 years ending 1870 as for the corresponding period ending 1860, viz., 90.74 per cent. In this case there would have been a colored population of 5,489,196; and our table would have to be reconstructed for the later decades as follows:—

	Colored Population.	Per Cent of Total Population.	Increase, Per Cent.		
			10 Years.	20 Years.	30 Years.
1860	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870	5,489,196	13.9	23.29	50.50	90.74
1880	6,580,793	13.1	20.06	48.15	80.85

Here we, indeed, find the share of the colored in the total population to be between that of 1860 and that of 1880, and the rate for the 20 years' period ending 1870 falls between that for 1860 and that for 1880 (1860, 54.57; 1870, 50.50; 1880, 48.15); but the gain per cent between 1860 and 1870 is made to be greater than that between 1870 and 1880 in the proportion of 23.39 to 20.06, while remaining even greater than for the preceding period. Now, if it be true that the influence of the war and of sudden and violent emancipation, often followed by wide dispersion, was in some considerable degree, higher or lower, unfavorable to the increase of the colored population between 1860 and 1870; and if no compensating cause can be adduced (and I do not know that any has been suggested), then such a ratio for the 20 years' period ending 1870 cannot reasonably be assumed.

3. We have said that it would be in a high degree irrational

to assume that the ratios for the several periods ending in 1870 could have been greater than for the corresponding periods ending in 1870; and we have seen what would be the effect of assuming these ratios to be actually the same. Let us now see what would have been the colored population of 1870, and what its relations to the white population, etc., had the ratios prevailing for the several periods ending in 1870 been the same as those for the corresponding periods ending in 1880. And, first, let it be supposed that the ratio for the 20 years ending in 1870 was that which prevailed for the 20 years ending 1880, viz., 48.15. Applying this ratio of increase to the colored of 1850, we should have for 1870 a colored population of 5,390,894; and our table would be reconstructed as follows: —

	Colored Population.	Per Cent of Total Population.	Increase, Per Cent.		
			10 Years.	20 Years.	30 Years.
1860	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870	5,390,894	13.8	21.37	48.15	87.59
1880	6,580,793	13.1	22.07	48.15	80.85

Here the figures for 1870 are in each case, except in respect to the one assumed common ratio, found between those for 1860 and those for 1880. The total colored population is, in round numbers, 950,000 above that of 1860, and 1,200,000 below that of 1880. The proportion of the colored to the total population, which was 14.1 in 1860, sinks to 13.8 in 1870, to fall further to 13.1 in 1880.

4. So far the process of the figures for 1860 to 1880 is in the direction indicated by the table generally. Let us, however, try to secure a result which shall be even more clearly self-consistent. We will assume that the ratio of increase for the 30 years' period ending in 1870 was the same with that for the corresponding term ending in 1860; and then see how our table will be constituted on this assumption.

	Colored Population.	Per Cent of Total Population.	Increase, Per Cent.		
			10 Years.	20 Years.	30 Years.
1860	4,441,830	14.1	22.07	54.57	90.74
1870	5,206,992	13.4	17.22	43.09	80.85
1880	6,580,793	13.1	26.38	48.15	80.85

I confess that the figures given above seem to me to represent not unfairly the probable colored population of 1870 and its relations to the general population and to its own past. Somewhat between three and four hundred thousand I believe to have been the loss by defective enumeration. The fall in the ratios of increase during the several periods from 22.07 for 10 years to 17.22; from 54.57 for 20 years to 43.09; from 90.74 for 30 years to 80.85 is to be attributed to the social confusion and the enhanced mortality of four years of war between 1861 and 1865, partially recovered from during the five years of peace, indeed, but still of social and political turmoil, immediately following.